

Correspondence on Surcharges

Mr. Speaker: It is quite apparent that the hon. member is building up to an argument with a certain subtlety, but I cannot accept his point. Therefore, I must ask him to come back to the motion.

Mr. Gregoire: Mr. Speaker, I regret having been out of order. That document is the one we would have liked to have on the subject.

In closing, I ask that all documents which could still throw some light on this matter be tabled.

(Text):

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Pickersgill: Hasn't the hon. member already spoken?

An hon. Member: If he has, he has unanimous consent.

Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, there has been for some days now a very interesting debate on this motion of the hon. member for Essex East. I have done considerable research; but having—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): —sat here and seen most of my material used by previous speakers I do find it difficult to raise something new.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Then let us vote.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): However, it is very gratifying to take part in this debate because there are some serious thoughts that I wish to put forward. I had not realized that I might be one of the last speakers of this very interesting and productive pre-Christmas session of 1962; but none the less there is, even in these last minutes, some importance to the matter we are considering. In order to bring my thoughts back to the matter at hand I want to read the first part of the motion, which appears on the order paper today, which is the sixtieth day of this session.

Mr. Habel: Which page?

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): It is page 20.

An hon. Member: What paragraph?

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): These are the words of this motion:

That an humble address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this house copies of correspondence or any documents exchanged between the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance or any other minister of the crown and officers of the Department of Justice—

Some hon. Members: Dispense.

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Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): I continue:

—or the privy council or any other government department or agency on the subject of surcharge and imports order—

Then it names the respective P.C. orders. It so happens, Mr. Speaker, that I do have the actual P.C. orders here. However, I am not going to take up the time of the house by reading them because I want to get down to the two basic issues that I feel have importance. I want to say very seriously that I think the hon. member for Essex East deserves credit for bringing this matter before the house. I think he has a very weak case and I think his argument when moving the motion proves that; but nevertheless it is an issue we should take time from our other busy work to consider, because it does have certain ramifications for the future.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, would my hon. friend permit me to ask him a question?

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): Yes.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Since the hon. member has said he has no new argument to offer, does he not think it would be becoming of this parliament to decide this matter tonight by a vote, and does he not realize that if the government refuses a vote it is obviously afraid of being defeated tonight?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Rubbish.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): Mr. Speaker, there is a temptation for me to break the happy festive spirit tonight and to answer old Scrooge from Essex East. However, I will not indulge in nasty remarks; I will simply say that I have one or two arguments that might be interjected here; and I add, in answer to the second part of his question—and surely this has been evident in the 60 days we have already sat—that this government is not afraid of anything.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Then let us have a vote.

Mr. Habel: What about Bill No. C-81?

Mr. Pearson: Yes, what about the customs bill?

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): There are, Mr. Speaker, two aspects—

Mr. McIlraith: There is no government.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): —of this motion that are significant. The first is the matter of the confidentiality of documents and the second, which is perhaps of greater importance and more concern, is the matter of legal opinions. Hon. members who have spoken previously have dealt with both these